

God, please bless the House and Senate, that we will do what is right. God, please give wisdom, strength, and courage to President Obama, that he will do what is right.

And three times, God please, God please, God please continue to bless America.

THE MASSIVE TRANSFER OF WEALTH FROM THE MANY TO THE HANDS OF A FEW

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH) for 5 minutes.

Mr. KUCINICH. The rancorous debate over the debt belies a fundamental truth of our economy: that it is run for the few at the expense of the many, that our entire government has been turned into a machine which takes the wealth of the mass of Americans and accelerates it into the hands of a few. Let me give you some examples.

Take war. War takes the money from the American people and puts it into the hands of arms manufacturers, of war profiteers, of private armies. The war in Iraq, based on lies, \$3 trillion will be the cost of that war, at least. The war in Afghanistan, based on a misreading of history, half a trillion dollars in expenses already. The war against Libya will be \$1 billion by September. Fifty percent of our discretionary spending goes for the Pentagon. A massive transfer of wealth into the hands of a few while the American people lack sufficient jobs, health care, housing, retirement security.

Our energy policies take the wealth from the American people and put it into the hands of the oil companies. We could be looking at \$150 a barrel for oil in the near future.

□ 1010

Our environmental policy takes the wealth of the people, clean air, clean water, and puts it in the hands of the polluters. It's a transfer of wealth not only from the present but from future generations, as our environment is ruined.

Insurance companies, what do they do? They take the wealth from the American people, in terms of what they charge people for health insurance, and they put it into the hands of the few.

We have to realize what this country's economy has become. Our monetary policy, through the Federal Reserve Act of 1913, privatized the money supply, gathers the wealth and puts it in the hands of the few while the Federal Reserve can keep creating money out of nothing, give it to banks to park at the Fed, and our small businesses are starved for capital.

Mark my words: Wall Street cashes in whether we have a default or not. And the same type of thinking that created billions in bailouts for Wall Street and more than \$1 trillion in giveaways by the Federal Reserve today leaves 26 million Americans either underemployed or unemployed.

And 9 out of 10 Americans over the age of 65 are facing cuts in their Social Security in order to pay for a debt which grew from tax cuts for the rich and from endless wars.

There is a massive transfer of wealth from the American people to the hands of the few, and it's going on right now as America's eyes are misdirected to the political theater of these histrionic debt negotiations: threats to shut down the government, a willingness to make the most vulnerable Americans pay dearly for debts they did not create. These are symptoms of a government which has lost its way, and they are a challenge to the legitimacy of the two-party system.

CONGRATULATING DR. JOHN SHANK ON HIS RETIREMENT FROM TEMPLE UNIVERSITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a dear friend and colleague, Dr. John Shank, and congratulate him on his retirement from Temple University. Dr. Shank is a tenured professor at Temple University, where he serves as the director of the Therapeutic Recreation Program within the Department of Rehabilitation Sciences.

In his 25 years of tremendous service to Temple, Professor Shank has put forth a level of commitment to the advancement of professional knowledge within the field of recreational therapy that is second to none. Without a doubt, John's scholarly successes have overwhelmingly contributed to the reputation of Temple University being regarded as the most prolific academic center within the field of recreational therapy. Not only has Dr. Shank made tremendous contributions to his field, he has served as an outstanding teacher and role model to those students who were fortunate enough to have him as a classroom instructor or research adviser.

Dr. Shank, thank you, for a lifetime of academic and recent achievements and for your contributions to the field of recreational therapy at Temple University. I congratulate you on your retirement and wish you well in the future.

COLOMBIA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker and Members of the House, very shortly the United States Congress is likely to consider three ill-conceived and ill-timed trade agreements that will do nothing to create jobs in this country. One of these agreements is with the nation of Colombia.

One of our most important responsibilities as elected officials is to promote and protect American jobs and American values. We do this by ensuring that those who receive trade preferences respect essential democratic rights. These are important rights: the right to speak out and protest, the right to organize unions and bargain collectively, and the right of citizens to support political efforts to improve their economic condition without reprisals.

Unfortunately, we see what happens when union members in Colombia try exercise their rights. Death squads are unleashed against union activists and human rights defenders; labor leaders are gunned down in broad daylight. This isn't yesterday's news. The intimidation and violence continue to this day. There have been 17 confirmed killings of unionists in Colombia this year, according to a human rights group. Last year, 90 unionists were murdered worldwide, 49 of them in Colombia. Colombia unionists face the highest rates of murder anywhere in the world.

To overcome longstanding objections to passage of the Colombia free trade agreement, President Santos of Colombia and President Obama signed a Labor Action Plan on April 7. The plan includes deadlines for new laws that could enable workers to form unions as a means to advance social progress in Colombia. This plan has deadlines to restrict the use of cooperatives that allow employers to evade bargaining directly with their workers. It calls for new labor enforcement agencies and the hiring of additional inspectors.

On the one hand, the labor action plan has important elements that are necessary and valuable, and President Santos is to be commended for advancing this initiative; however, there are major gaps in the action plan. There are no benchmarks to show whether or not the new laws on paper have translated into laws on the ground. Will workers have greater ability to exercise their rights, to organize, to bargain collectively, and to negotiate contracts directly with their employers? Will levels of violence and murders against trade unionists be substantially reduced? Will employers and companies that violate the rights of workers be punished, as prescribed under the new laws?

We don't know if these are merely gains on paper or if they are real. And based upon the accelerated schedule, it appears we won't be given a chance to learn if there will be real change on the ground before we consider the trade agreement with Colombia.

Any trade agreement with Colombia must produce a verifiable reduction in the violence. It must protect human rights. It must end the impunity enjoyed by death squads and paramilitaries. Due to the lack of benchmarks for progress, Colombia could still have a record year of assassinations and the action plan would be declared a success.

Under the plan, the Colombian Government is supposed to be providing expanded physical protections for union activists. I met with regional and national union leaders last month who told me that little has changed on the ground. They told me they haven't received protection.

The action plan calls for hiring additional labor inspectors over the next 4 years to enforce these new laws. There's a program to relocate teachers who have received death threats. There is a program to address the backlog of thousands of union homicide cases that have yet to be prosecuted. And there is no assurance that the actions will be carried out.

Last week, the Ways and Means Republicans opposed efforts to require Colombia to meet its obligations under the action plan as of the date the free trade agreement goes into force. Without this provision, the U.S. has no leverage to assure implementation of the labor action plan. Maybe that is what the multinational corporations pushing this deal want. And since the agreement is being brought to the floor under fast track, Congress will not be able to consider amendments to make the action plan enforceable.

Given this predicament, the least the administration can do is to stand behind its own action plan. The implementing legislation should require Colombia to fully comply with the plan before the agreement takes effect. The administration should confirm that compliance through on-the-ground consultations with labor and human rights organizations. Without real change on the ground, this trade agreement is not fair to Colombian workers. They deserve their basic right not to be subjected to threats and murder because they demand a better life.

This agreement does not fairly represent our Nation's values, and it's fundamentally unfair to America's workers. They can't compete with workers who face death squads for wanting better working conditions. They can't compete with a country that continues to allow thousands of assassins to operate with impunity. It's past time that we, as a Nation, stand up for American values and American workers.

REMEMBERING FORMER FIRST LADY BETTY FORD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. HUIZENGA) for 5 minutes.

Mr. HUIZENGA of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a great American with a legacy of being a passionate advocate for the issues that she believed in.

Former First Lady Betty Ford passed away earlier this week at the age of 93. She was known as a beacon of warmth and kindness. She was also a tough lady. She's being buried today next to her husband, Jerry Ford, in Grand Rapids at the Presidential museum.

My entire family and I had opportunities to meet her over the years, and

I have to say, it's truly an honor now to represent part of the district that Jerry Ford had so long served in this very House.

□ 1020

We are all deeply saddened by her passing. Mrs. Ford cared deeply about others, as evidenced in her work helping people through their addiction and recovery from chemical dependency through the Betty Ford Clinic, and her work to raise awareness of breast cancer and many other issues, all at a time when those things really were not discussed much in public.

Above all, she led the Ford team as she supported her husband's service to a Nation with admirable love and mutual respect, at times literally being his voice, like she did that evening that he made his concession speech in 1976.

Well, this spring, at the dedication ceremony of the statue of President Ford here in the Rotunda lying just beyond, we were reminded of his calm, steady leadership, and his ability to reach out to others. They were always a team. And it was as much a tribute to her as it was to President Ford.

Again, we continue to pray for the Ford children, Susan, Jack, Mike, and Steve, and the entire Ford family as we pay tribute to their mother and the legacy that she leaves behind.

Rest well, Mrs. Ford, rest well.

COLOMBIA: DEMAND RESULTS ON LABOR AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, 6 days ago, on Friday, July 1, armed men assassinated a candidate for the city council of Caldas, a town just outside of Medellin, Colombia. He was the ninth local candidate murdered over the last few months.

Last Thursday, June 30, Luis Eduardo Gomez, a Colombian journalist and witness for a high profile investigation into links between Colombian politicians and paramilitary groups, was shot down and killed in northwestern Antioquia, an area I visited first in 2001. Gomez was 70 years old. He was returning home at night with his wife when he was gunned down. He was murdered a few days after another witness in the case was killed. And investigators for the Attorney General have said several other witnesses have disappeared.

Antonio Mendoza Morales was a councilman in the Caribbean town of San Onofre, Sucre. The 34-year-old Mendoza was also a leader of the Association of Displaced Persons of San Onofre and the Montes de Maria. He was also shot and killed last Thursday night. He is at least the 11th land claims, victims' rights, or displaced persons leader to have been killed in Colombia so far this year.

Displaced persons and victims' rights advocates in the Sucre region received a series of death threats during the month of June. We don't know yet whether Mendoza's killing is related to these threats. But I traveled to Sucre in 2003, and can attest to the daily violence suffered by local leaders and displaced persons and campesino organizations.

On June 7, Anna Fabricia Cordoba, 51, a leader of the displaced and a land rights activist, was shot dead by an unidentified gunman while riding on a bus in Medellin. She had fled her home in northern Antioquia in 2001 after several of her family members were killed. She had been campaigning for the restitution of lands to Colombia's displaced, and was a member of Ruta Pacifica, the Peaceful Path, a women's organization calling for a negotiated end to the war. In 2008, Ruta Pacifica testified before the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission about Colombia's internally displaced. Cordoba, an Afro-Colombian, had been receiving death threats for months. She had asked the Colombian Government for protection, but had not received any. Her children have received death threats following their mother's death.

The Inter-American Commission for Human Rights condemned Cordoba's murder and expressed alarm over the increase in serious threats against Colombian human rights defenders. The situation is getting worse. Every day I receive news about threats, murders, and disappearances of Colombian labor and human rights activists and community leaders.

Mr. Speaker, I recite this sad litany of recent murders to impress upon my colleagues that these are real people, real leaders, being murdered every single day in Colombia. Will their murderers be brought to justice or will their deaths be just one more case that remains in impunity? Will the government's promises to their families to seek justice be fulfilled? Will other threatened leaders and their families receive real protection? I hope so, but we simply don't know yet. Promises are easy. Results take time, commitment, and political will to achieve.

This morning, some of my colleagues will describe the dangers facing Colombia's labor activists. Colombia still remains the most dangerous place in the world to be a unionist. But violence against Colombia's workers happens in the context of a very threatening landscape for anyone who has the courage to organize their communities, run for public office, or stand up for the rights of the poor, the displaced, and the victims of human rights abuse. The source of violence are all the illegal armed actors, the FARC, the ELN, the paramilitaries, and criminal networks known as BACRIM. And also, sadly, it includes members and units of the Colombian military and police.

Before any trade agreement is brought to the Congress for a vote, we owe it to the brave people of Colombia